

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1 – 37 (Canceled)

38. (Currently Amended) A telecommunications network providing non-dedicated circuit pathways between access nodes and switches in the network comprising:

a plurality of access nodes disposed about a service area of the telecommunications network;

a switch pool adapted to communicate with the access nodes in order to provide access by a plurality of user terminals to services of the telecommunications network;

at least two media gateways providing connections between the access nodes and the switch pool via a plurality of circuit pathways; and

a media gateway selection node operably coupled between the media gateways and the switch pool, the media gateway selection node configured for reserving and releasing circuit pathways as needed for use between switches of the switch pool and the access nodes, wherein an available circuit pathway between a requesting switch and a target access node is identified in

a Media Gateway Selection Database (MGWSDB) by a Circuit Identity Code (CIC).

~~accessing a media gateway selection database to determine which of the plurality of circuit pathways is available;~~

~~selecting a media gateway from the at least two media gateways; and~~

~~allocating a circuit pathway between a switch and a target access node via the selected media gateway, wherein said allocating step comprises updating the media gateway selection database to indicate that the circuit pathway has been allocated.~~

39. (Previously Presented) The network of claim 38, wherein the switches comprise Mobile Switching Centers (MSCs).

40. (Previously Presented) The network of claim 38, wherein the access nodes comprise Base Station Controllers (BSCs).

41. (Previously Presented) The network of claim 38, wherein the access nodes comprise Radio Network Servers (RNSs).

42. (Previously Presented) The network of claim 38, wherein the gateway selection node database comprises a data structure defining relationships among gateways, access nodes, and identity codes associated with the circuit pathways.

43. (Canceled)

44. (Previously Presented) The network of claim 42, wherein the identity codes comprise Circuit Identity Codes (CICs).

45. (Currently Amended) A method of providing non-dedicated circuit pathways between access nodes and switches in a telecommunications network having a plurality of media gateways operably connected to a media gateway selection node, the method comprising the steps of:

allocating, by the media gateway selection node, a circuit pathway between a switch and a target access node, wherein said allocating step comprises:

accessing a media gateway selection database to determine which of a plurality of circuit pathways is available;

reserving and releasing circuit pathways as needed for use between switches of the switch pool and the access nodes, wherein an available circuit pathway between a requesting switch and a target access node is identified in

a Media Gateway Selection Database (MGWSDB) by a Circuit Identity Code (CIC).

~~selecting a media gateway from the plurality of media gateways;~~
~~updating the media gateway selection database to indicate that the circuit pathway has been allocated; and~~
~~subsequently, de-allocating the circuit pathway between the switch and target access node.~~

46. (Previously Presented) The network of claim 45, wherein the steps of allocating and de-allocating are performed dynamically.

47. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 45, wherein the step of de-allocating the circuit pathways is performed by the media gateway selection node.

48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 47, further comprising the step of maintaining a switch pool comprising the switches of the telecommunications network, the switch pool operably connected to the media gateway selection node.

49. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 45, further comprising the step of maintaining in the media gateway selection database a data structure defining relationships among gateways, access nodes, switches, and identity codes.

50. (Currently Amended) A media gateway selection node for use in a telecommunications network for providing non-dedicated circuit pathways between access nodes and switches of a switch pool in the network, comprising:

means for storing data concerning media gateways, access nodes, switches, and circuit pathways of the network;

means for accessing the data;

means for defining relationships among the media gateways, access nodes, switches, and circuit pathways; and

means for reserving and releasing circuit pathways as needed for use between individual switches and individual access nodes, wherein an available circuit pathway between a requesting switch and a target access node is identified in
a Media Gateway Selection Database (MGWSDB) by a Circuit Identity Code (CIC).

~~wherein the means for reserving and releasing the circuit pathways is configured for:~~

~~accessing the means for storing data to determine which of a plurality of circuit pathways is available;~~

~~selecting a media gateway from a plurality of media gateways;~~

~~allocating a circuit pathway between a switch and a target access node, wherein said allocating step comprises updating the means for storing data to indicate that the circuit pathway has been allocated; ; and~~

subsequently de-allocating each allocated circuit pathway between the switch and the target access node.

51. (Previously Presented) The media gateway selection node according to claim 50, wherein the data concerning media gateways, access nodes, switches, and circuit pathways, further comprises load carrying capacity.

52. (Previously Presented) The media gateway selection node according to claim 50, wherein the means for defining relationships among the media gateways, access nodes, switches, and circuit pathways is adapted to perform dynamically.

53. (Previously Presented) The media gateway selection node according to claim 50, wherein the means for reserving and releasing circuit pathways as needed for use between individual switches and individual access nodes is adapted to perform dynamically.

54. (Previously Presented) A method for dynamic allocation of a circuit pathway between a requesting switch, the requesting switch being one of a pool of switches, and an access node via a media gateway (MGW), comprising the steps of:

contacting a media gateway selection node (MGWSN) requesting a circuit connection to a target access node;

consulting by the MGWSN in response to the circuit connection request a Media Gateway Selection Database (MGWSDB) to determine an available circuit pathway between the requesting switch and the target access node, wherein the circuit pathway is identified in the MGWSDB by a Circuit Identity Code (CIC);

selecting by the MGWSN one media gateway from among a plurality of media gateways;

reserving the CIC associated with a selected circuit pathway at the one media gateway; and

sending the identity of the MGW and the CIC to the requesting switch.

55. (Previously Presented) A node in a telecommunication network for dynamic allocation of a circuit pathway between a requesting switch, and a target access node via a media gateway, the node comprising:

a media gateway selection node (MGWSN) for selecting a circuit pathway between the requesting switch and the target access node, wherein the MGWSN further comprises means for notifying the requesting switch of the selection and means for reserving the selection with a selected media gateway, wherein the circuit pathway includes:

the requesting switch, the requesting switch being one of a pool of switches;

the target access node, the target access node being one of a group of access nodes; and

the media gateway, being one of a plurality of gateways; and

a media gateway database (MGWSDB) coupled with the MGWSN, for storing circuit identity codes (CIC) necessary to control the allocation of circuit pathways by the MGWSN.